

AMHERST SCHOOLS

Fiscal Year 2007

Amherst School Committee

Elaine Brighty, Chair

Andy Churchill, Vice-Chair

Kathleen Anderson, Secretary

Sonia Correa-Pope

Chrystel Romero

The Amherst School Committee is an elected body responsible for the public education of all children in kindergarten through grade six and of pre-school children with substantial special needs in our community. The Committee meets regularly on the third Tuesday of each month and welcomes citizen participation at each meeting. The members of this committee also serve as Amherst's members of the Regional School Committee, which has responsibility for the educational programs for children in grades seven through twelve.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Student enrollment as of October 1, 2006 was:

GRADE	STUDENTS
Pre K	64
K	192
1	190
2	195
3	203
4	195
5	194
6	<u>222</u>
TOTAL	1,455

Enrollments across grades Pre-K through six for 2006-2007 were down by 23 students. Twenty-three children from Amherst attended other school districts under the School Choice program.

Primary goals for the Amherst Schools are as follows:

1. developing and maintaining an up-to-date, innovative, multicultural, academically challenging curriculum that promotes high standards and success for all students
2. providing creative, multi-faceted instruction that maintains high standards, engages all students, and enables all students to be successful learners
3. making all students feel fully welcome and a part of our schools, regardless of race, class, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, culture, academic success, or physical abilities
4. eliminating the achievement gap among students from different racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds
5. addressing the demands and opportunities facing our schools as a result of the rapid growth in the use of technology throughout our society

6. increasing communication and collaboration among the district's stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and the larger community – and using parents and the community more effectively as educational resources
7. hiring and retaining a high quality teaching and administrative staff
8. equipping and maintaining school buildings to provide healthy, accessible, modern learning environments that support the achievement of our mission
9. sustaining a physically and emotionally safe environment in our schools for students and staff.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Principal activities and events during the 2006-2007 school year include the following:

Curriculum and Faculty Professional Development

- Work was completed on the K-12 Curriculum Guides for Mathematics, English/Language Arts, and Science. The completed guides are published on the district website at <http://www.arps.org/Curriculum>.
- A social studies curriculum review committee, chaired by ARHS principal Mark Jackson, began work in 2006. The work of this committee includes a process for school and community dialogue regarding social studies curriculum. The completed K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Guide is slated for publication in the summer of 2008.

ELL

- With the resignation of the ELL Director at the end of the 2005-2006 school year, Jeanne White, Student Services Administrator, was given district oversight of the ELL program. She worked with school-level coordinators to develop a model of oversight, program development, professional development, and assessment to address the restructuring of the ELL Department.
- The primary goal for ELL in FY 07 was to develop a comprehensive program model for ELL services for students K–12.

Facilities

In 2006-2007, the facilities staff completed or supervised the following projects in the Amherst elementary school buildings:

- Wildwood
 - closet conversion to padded room
 - fire alarm upgrade
- Marks Meadow
 - computer room air-conditioning installation
 - steam heat piping repair
 - safety fence along stone wall
- Fort River and Crocker Farm
 - interior and exterior lighting retrofits
- All Schools
 - HVAC, electrical, plumbing repairs and preventative maintenance
 - completed safety and fire inspections in all facilities.

In addition, Facilities Director Ron Bohonowicz chaired the Fort River and Wildwood Building Committee, which developed a Statement of Interest to be submitted to the Massachusetts Building Authority in June 2007. This is the first step in requesting State funding for potential school building renovations. A similar Statement of Interest will also be submitted for the Mark's Meadow school building, which is owned by the University of Massachusetts.

The New England School Development Council completed the research portion of the Amherst Public School District demographic study and presented their preliminary findings to the Amherst School Committee in April. The final NESDEC report will be presented to the district in late summer or early fall.

Human Resources/Personnel

During 2006-2007, the Human Resources department has completed or is in the process of completing the following initiatives:

- Finalized the contract, statement of work, and functional specifications document with Kronos and implemented the new Kronos personnel database.
- Implemented 457/Flexible Spending Accounts for staff.
- Collected and reviewed demographic data on all staff to meet safety and software initiatives.
- Collected detailed background and educational information on all teachers and paraprofessionals in anticipation of the Massachusetts Department of Education new EPIMS (Educator Database) requirement.
- Implemented national criminal records check for new teachers coming from out-of-state.
- Performed over 1,500 criminal records checks of new and returning staff, all volunteers, coaches and tutors.
- Conducted a comprehensive Health Fair for all employees.
- Conducted an informational session for paraprofessionals to work toward degree and certification attainment.
- Completed contract negotiations with AFSCME cafeteria workers.
- Conducted Open Enrollment for insurance plans and flexible spending accounts.
- Completed negotiations for a one-year extension of the APEA (Amherst-Pelham Education Association) negotiated employment contract covering teachers, paraprofessionals and clerical staff. Administrators and cafeteria staff also agreed to an extension for an additional year through June 30, 2008.

Information Systems

In 2006-2007, the Information Systems Department completed or is continuing work on the following initiatives:

- Increased wide-area-network (WAN) backbone speed by a factor of 1,000.
- Consolidated network servers to a centralized location.
- Upgraded the Storage Area Network (SAN) – centralized storage of digital files and software.
- Continued working with other area districts and D.O.E.-selected COGNOS for a State-wide Educational Data Warehouse (EDW) for longitudinal analysis of student information and test scores.
- Prepared data for, and shipped local data to, the Educational Data Warehouse.
- Installed a remote backup server to accept nightly backups of district data to aid in disaster recovery.

- Worked with other area districts and D.O.E. to create reporting tools in the EDW for longitudinal analysis of student information and test scores.
- Centralized development of district-wide reports.
- Upgraded Student Information System from PowerSchool Pro to PowerSchool Premier for enhanced reporting and web-based GradeBook functions.
- Installed an emergency parent and staff notification system (Connect-Ed).
- Boosted Internet access “pipeline” from 3 mbps to 25 mbps.
- Installed Kronos human resources software.
- Explored and analyzing formative assessment software tools.

Program Development and Community Connections

In 2006-2007, the Office of Program Development has:

- Secured a three-year federal foreign language instruction (FLAP) grant that will establish a K-6 Chinese language and culture program at the Wildwood School and also fund a distance learning capability at the High School and support the development of an exploratory foreign language program at the upper elementary level at all schools. A new Chinese teacher for Wildwood Elementary has been hired and work has begun on multi-level initiatives related to Chinese instruction in the schools.
- Secured an “Expanded Time on Learning” planning grant from the Massachusetts Department of Education. The grant will fund district-wide and school-based study groups who will consider the possibilities and implications of increasing learning time at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
- Continued planning and collaboration with Amherst College to promote equity and achievement for all our students. This includes implementing a pilot “Pipeline Project” initiative, which is a school-year plus summer program of academic tutoring and mentoring for low-income students.
- Wendy Kohler, Executive Director of Program Development, served as a consultant to Amherst College in the establishment of their new “Center for Civic Engagement.” The new Pipeline Project, an innovative program for students in grades 6-9, began in the spring and continued with a summer program in July. Pipeline students met with Amherst College tutors in the spring on the College campus and then attended classes plus an enrichment program (led by ARPS teachers with Amherst College student assistants) during the month of July.
- Established and implemented new guidelines and fee structure for school facilities and fields use.
- Collaborated with the Amherst Education Foundation on the launching of a new AEF website that includes improved fund-raising capacities.
- Began working to gather data required for the EQA audit scheduled for Fall 2007.

Student Services

- The Student Services office oversaw all aspects of the CPR – Coordinated Program Review – which was conducted by the Department of Education in 2006-2007. The CPR includes an in-depth review of district programs including Special Education, Civil Rights, McKinney Vento, ELL, and Title I. The DOE will forward a full report of the CPR findings to the Superintendent at some time in late summer or early fall 2007.
- Monthly, in-depth professional development for paraprofessionals has been implemented, along with a training manual for their use. In addition, a substantial number of training

programs have been provided for teaching, administrative, maintenance, nursing, custodial, and transportation staffs.

- Created a Student Support Team model/manual for schools and administrative training.
- Created final revision of the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan.
- Revised the District 504 Manual.
- Revised the PRISM Discipline Manual.
- Coordinated crisis-preparedness efforts and working collaboratively with the Amherst Police Department.
- Coordinated collaboration with Family Outreach, which provided a connection between the community and the Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools.